

Madam Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 3021, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public Schools Facilities Act, which would authorize funding for modernization, renovation and repair projects in schools with poor building quality.

Students and teachers deserve a clean and safe environment to go to school. However, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, one-third of schools, which serve approximately 14 million students, are desperately in need of extensive repairs.

As a former high school teacher, I believe that it is crucial to ensure that the grants authorized under this legislation be available for schools in which existing building conditions are putting the health and safety of students and faculty at risk.

Many schools suffer from inadequate ventilation. When combined with toxic substances, such as mold, asbestos and lead, this lack of ventilation can cause significant health problems. Students and teachers in schools with indoor air quality problems suffer from a range of health problems from headaches, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, to respiratory illness. Even more troubling, when indoor air pollutants accumulate in inadequately ventilated schools, the air can become carcinogenic.

In Arizona's Tempe Union High School District, where I taught for almost 30 years, Corona del Sol High School has an HVAC system in desperate need of replacement. According to the Arizona Republic, some within the Corona del Sol community have expressed illnesses ranging from allergies and asthma to tumors and cancers. The high school district is struggling to find funds to replace HVAC systems, and as a result the problems continue to persist.

I would like to thank Chairman Miller for working with me to ensure that the grants pursuant to this legislation can be used to help schools make critical repairs to protect the health and safety of students and teachers due to building conditions. Students and teachers should never have to compromise their health and safety to attend school, and this legislation will help prevent this from happening.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

